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OPERATION WATCHTOWER: AN ANALYSIS IN OPERATIONAL DESIGN

by

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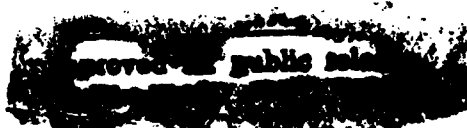
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The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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Abstract of  
**OPERATION WATCHTOWER: AN ANALYSIS OF OPERATIONAL DESIGN**

This paper analyzes Operation WATCHTOWER through the study of its operational design. Identification of Operation WATCHTOWER's failures and successes emphasize valid lessons which, if learned and applied in future operations, will increase operational efficiency and ultimately save lives and resources. The study is focused primarily on analysis of the operational planning and execution phases of Operation WATCHTOWER. Limited analysis of the 'operational leadership' of the numerous operational commanders involved in the planning and execution is made. The principle findings in examining the planning and execution of Operation WATCHTOWER are that commencing offensive operations before sufficient operational reserve forces and assets can be attained, creates an operation dependent on high risk and a small margin of error. Operational plans that adequately plan for the application of available forces and assets yet fail to make provisions for their sustainment and relief, will perilously approach their culmination point or fail during the exchange of unexpected battles and engagements. Unity of command, unity of effort and effective cooperation are essential to the success of any operation exposed to the 'fog of war'. Every operational/tactical commander must fully understand the operational intent of his superior. These lessons serve to validate, reinforce and emphasize the importance of today's operational doctrine and principles of war.

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# OPERATION WATCHTOWER: AN ANALYSIS IN OPERATIONAL DESIGN

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

*"To win at the operational level, we have to educate ourselves to operational-level thought ... There will be a strong penalty in the next war if our senior commanders and staffs are not adequately prepared to make operational-level decisions before the first battle."*

*Major General Gordon Sullivan, US Army.*

Operation WATCHTOWER, the amphibious invasion of Guadalcanal, Tulagi, and Gavutu islands, was the initial offensive operation of the three-phased Solomon Islands campaign for control of the Japanese strategic bastion at Rabaul. Conducted from 7 August 1942 until 9 February 1943, Operation WATCHTOWER was planned and executed during the infant stages of U.S. involvement in the war in the South Pacific. WATCHTOWER involved joint U.S. and combined Allied forces primarily from the Pacific theaters against Japanese naval, land and air forces. Many obstacles and shortfalls were encountered in the immature Pacific theaters which endangered the fulfillment of Operation WATCHTOWER's operational objectives.

The intent of this paper is to examine the operational design of Operation WATCHTOWER, specifically its operational planning and execution phases. Identification of its operational failures and successes will support and uphold the principles of today's joint operations doctrine as well as reinforce adherence to them in the planning and execution of tomorrow's joint operations.

## CHAPTER II

### STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

**STRATEGIC SITUATION.** Japan's efforts in building an empire rich in oil and minerals proceeded essentially unchecked following their attack on Pearl Harbor. Countered by only a handful of dispersed raids by U.S. carrier forces in the Pacific Ocean, the Japanese achieved rapid territorial expansion. They swiftly attacked and occupied Indochina, Thailand, the Gilbert Islands, Guam, the Philippines, Wake Island, the Netherlands East Indies, New Britain, Bougainville, and New Guinea.

In the spring of 1942, positive events unfolded for the United States. On 18 April, Vice Adm. Halsey attacked targets located on the Japanese mainland with 'Doolittle's Raiders'. Next, U.S. forces achieved a strategic victory in the Battle of the Coral Sea (4-8 May). "For the first time since the war began, Japanese expansion had been checked."<sup>1</sup> The Japanese defeat at the Battle of Midway (4-6 June) brought the United States another strategic victory. "At one blow - in a single day's fighting - the advantage gained at Pearl Harbor had been lost and parity in carrier power was restored in the Pacific."<sup>2</sup> U.S. Pacific Forces were now in a position to seize the initiative and go on the offensive for the very first time.

**JAPANESE STRATEGIC PLANNING.** The expansion of Japan's newly captured empire came fairly easily. However, "the rapidity with which the Japanese had achieved their main objectives left them without a decision as to their further strategy."<sup>3</sup> The Japanese

military hierarchy however, did not formulate strategic plans easily due to friction created by interservice and intraservice differences. The Japanese Army advocated maintaining large numbers of troops on the continent due to fears of Russian expansion and argued against an invasion of Australia due to limited troop strength. The Japanese Navy argued amongst themselves whether to continue the drive south to isolate Australia or drive north and east against the Aleutians and Midway. In March, the Imperial General Headquarters arrived at a 'compromise' strategy - Isolate Australia. This strategy reflected the strategic importance of cutting off the lines of communications which the United States had established from North America to Australia. The Japanese planned to capture New Guinea, and then advance south into the Solomon and Fiji Islands, and New Caledonia.

Adm. Yamamoto, however, had a different strategic vision. He advocated the destruction of the United States Fleet, specifically its aircraft carriers. Adm. Yamamoto's proposal was to destroy the U.S. aircraft carriers in operations at Midway. Stunned by Doolittle's attack, Japan's pride had been wounded and the Japanese hastily made plans for a counter-attack on Midway. "Through compromise the Japanese had adopted two concurrent strategies which were destined to over-extend their forces."<sup>4</sup>

The initial operational objective of Japan's new strategy was to capture the Allied base at Port Moresby, New Guinea. Japan's capture of Rabaul, New Britain in January 1942, had provided them with a strategically located base from which to operate air and naval forces against Port Moresby. Following their defeat at Midway, the Imperial General Headquarters cancelled the invasions of

Fiji and New Caledonia. Japan however, had built a seaplane base at Tulagi in the Solomon Islands to be used for the invasion of Port Moresby. They also had commenced construction of an airfield on the island of Guadalcanal which would be capable of supporting sixty aircraft in early August. This Japanese operational objective would greatly influence U.S. strategic planners in their decisions of where to start their offensive operations.

#### U. S. STRATEGIC PLANNING.

***"In order to impose our will upon Japan, it will be necessary for us to project our fleet and land forces across the Pacific and wage war in Japanese waters. To effect this requires that we have sufficient bases to support the fleet, both during its projection and afterwards."***

***LtCol Earl Ellis, USMC, 1921.***

Ironically, two decades later, these prophetic words fit the thoughts of Admiral Ernest J. King, Commander in Chief United States Fleet. As a facilitator between national policy and military strategy, he had his own vision which opposed the priorities laid before him by the Allied Grand Strategy of 'Germany First'.

"We didn't realize it, but Admiral King had started what would develop into the Guadalcanal Campaign [author's note: actually Solomons Campaign] at the start of the year, long before Midway."<sup>5</sup> In February, Adm. King told Chief of Staff Gen. George C. Marshall, "that he considered it necessary to garrison certain South and Southwest Pacific islands with Army troops in preparation for launching U.S. Marines on an early offensive against the enemy."<sup>6</sup> In March, Adm. King proposed his plan of operations against the Japanese to President Roosevelt. He summarized it in three phrases:

Hold Hawaii; Support Australia; and Drive Northwestward from New Hebrides.<sup>7</sup>

Adm. King had monitored Japan's expansion with tremendous concern since assuming duties in December, 1941. Constrained by the Allied Grand Strategy, he was forced to fight a defensive war in the Pacific Ocean. Adm. King feared that Japanese forces would continue to expand unrestrained and cut off the U.S. lines of communication between Hawaii and Australia. King fully understood the strategic importance of the Solomon Islands. Occupation of these islands would permit development of a chain of bases which would be used to advance toward the Japanese mainland, contain southward Japanese expansion, and serve to protect vulnerable sea lines of communications to Australia.

Following the strategic victories at Coral Sea and Midway, a reevaluation of U.S. policy in the Pacific was conducted by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The JCS agreed the time was at hand for the United States to seize the strategic initiative and go on the offensive in the Pacific.

Adm. King saw the opportunity to put his plans into action. He decided that the location to begin offensive operations had to be the Guadalcanal-Tulagi area in the Solomon Islands. Accordingly, Adm. King proposed the operation to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. However, Generals Marshall and Arnold were firmly committed to the build-up of the U.S. forces in England for Operation BOLERO as directed by President Roosevelt. Thus, they were cool to Adm. King's proposal.<sup>8</sup>

Like the Japanese, the U.S. military hierarchy also had interservice strategy differences. "Before the Joint Chiefs of Staff could issue orders for the attack, they had to settle serious

problems regarding command and the employment of forces."<sup>9</sup>

They became the mediators of a 'Battle of the CINCs' for command of the first U.S. offensive in the Pacific. To no-one's surprise, the JCS mediators sided with their respective service chiefs.

In early June, Gen. MacArthur proposed his plans for a single offensive with the objective as the New Britain - New Ireland area. Gen. Marshall supported General MacArthur, the Commander-in-Chief of the Southwest Pacific Area (CINCSWPA) and advocated that MacArthur command these offensive operations.

At the same time Adm. Nimitz was formulating his plans for initial offensive operations in the Solomon and Santa Cruz Islands. His sequential operations would establish bases to support further operations to the north, with New Britain - New Guinea as the final objective of the campaign. Adm. King advocated that Adm. Nimitz, the Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific Ocean Areas (CINCPOA), command these offensive operations since Adm. Nimitz possessed the naval and amphibious assets to accomplish them. Adm. King realized, however, that cooperation from Gen. MacArthur would be needed in supplying land-based aircraft, surface ships, and submarines that were needed to supplement Adm. Nimitz' theater assets.

The 'Battle of the CINCs' boiled down to a debate over: the sector of main effort, application of forces and assets, method of defeating the opponent, U.S. vulnerabilities and who should command these offensive operations.

Gen. MacArthur's and Adm. Nimitz' proposed operational schemes differed in methods of defeating the enemy. Gen. MacArthur's plan favored striking directly at the primary objective, while Adm. Nimitz' plan favored attacking it peripherally in a step-by-step

manner. The validity of MacArthur's plan lay in the ability of Japanese forces to attack Australia from captured Allied positions at Port Moresby. The validity of Nimitz' plan lay in the Japanese ability to interdict U.S. lines of communication from bases in the Solomon Islands, Santa Cruz Islands and the Fijis.

By the end of June, Adm. King hoping for a compromise solution, "suggested that Adm. Gormaley command the offensive until the Tulagi operation was over, and that thereafter General MacArthur should control the advance toward Rabaul."<sup>10</sup>

On 2 July 1942, the Joint Chiefs settled the 'Battle of the CINCs' by issuance of the 'Joint Directive for Offensive Operations in the Southwest Pacific Area Agreed on by the United States Chiefs of Staff.' It directed that offensive operations were to begin immediately in the Solomons under Adm. Nimitz' and Adm. Gormaley's command.

### CHAPTER III

#### THEATER ORGANIZATION

CREATION OF PACIFIC THEATERS. On 30 March 1942, the Joint Chiefs of Staff divided the Pacific Ocean into two theaters of war: the Pacific Ocean Area (POA), commanded by Admiral Chester W. Nimitz - CINCPOA; and the Southwest Pacific Area (SWPA), commanded by General Douglas MacArthur - CINCSWPA, (figure 1). Nimitz' headquarters were located at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii and MacArthur having fled from the Japanese in the Philippines nineteen days earlier, set up his headquarters in Australia.<sup>1</sup> By today's standards MacArthur's SWPA would be considered a theater of operation.

The expanse of Nimitz' Pacific Ocean Area prompted the JCS to subdivide it into three theaters of operation. Two of these theaters of operation: the North Pacific Area (NPA), and the Central Pacific Area (CPA), remained under Nimitz' command. Nimitz was directed to appoint a CINC for the third theater of operation, the South Pacific Area (SPA). He appointed Vice-Admiral Robert L. Ghormley who assumed command as CINCSPA on 19 June, and took up headquarters at Auckland, New Zealand.

COMSOPAC Op-Plan 1-42 directed that "the eastern and western boundaries of the SPA and SWPA respectively will, as of August 1st, be Longitude 159 degrees East from the equator southward."<sup>2</sup> This repositioned the Guadalcanal - Tulagi area in the SPA under Vice Adm. Ghormley's command. The remainder of the Solomon Islands resided in the SWPA under Gen. MacArthur's command, as shown in figure 2.

### COMMAND RELATIONSHIPS.

As depicted in figure 3, Adm. Nimitz - CINCPAC and Gen. MacArthur - CINCSWPA, received strategic tasking from the JCS which was established in February. The JCS executive for the Southwest Pacific Area was Gen. George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army. Admiral Ernest J. King, Commander in Chief, U. S. Fleet, was the JCS for the Pacific Ocean Areas.

Vice Adm. Gormley, was the SPA theater of operations commander assigned to plan and execute Operation WATCHTOWER. Vice Adm. Gormley was subordinate to Adm. Nimitz - the POA theater of war commander. Vice Adm. Gormley, commanded three Task Forces, acting as Commander Southern Pacific Forces (COMSOPAC).

TF 61 - the Expeditionary Force - was commanded by Vice Adm. F. J. Fletcher. This force was essentially the complete maritime invasion force and was subdivided into a task group and a task force. TG 61.1 - the Air Support Force, commanded by Fleet Adm. L. Noyes consisted of three aircraft carriers and assigned battleships, cruisers, and destroyers.

TF 62 - the Amphibious Force - was commanded by Rear Adm. R. K. Turner. This force consisted of cruisers, destroyers, transports and troops that would support or make the landings.

TF 63 - the Land-Based Air Forces - was commanded by Rear Adm. J. S. McCain. This force consisted of the land-based aircraft that would support the operation from various bases in the SPA.

## CHAPTER IV

### PREPARATIONS AND PLANS

**STRATEGIC GUIDANCE.** On 25 June, Adm. King sent his warning order to Adm. Nimitz and Vice Adm. Ghorale which directed them to begin planning for offensive operations in the SPA. Adm. King's guidance required that, "Santa Cruz Island, Tulagi, and adjacent areas would be seized and occupied by Marines under CINCPAC, and Army troops from Australia then would form the permanent occupation garrison. D-Day would be about 1 August."<sup>1</sup>

The 'Joint Directive for Offensive Operations in the Southwest Pacific Area Agreed on by the United States Chiefs of Staff' was issued by the JCS on 2 July. It provided finalized national strategic guidelines to the Pacific theater commanders Adm. Nimitz and Vice Adm. Ghorale. More specifically, it shaped the campaign plan for offensive operations in the Solomons by defining the strategic objective, and dividing the campaign scheme into three phases.

Phase I would be the seizure of the islands of Santa Cruz and Tulagi, along with positions on adjacent islands. Adm. Nimitz would command this operation, with Gen. MacArthur concentrating on interdiction of enemy air and naval activity to the west. Gen. MacArthur then would take command of Phase II - the seizure of other Solomon Islands plus positions on New Guinea, as well as Phase III - the capture of Rabaul and adjacent bases in New Britain and New Ireland.<sup>2</sup>

Transitional, in terms of operational command and theater of

war boundaries, the Solomons Campaign would begin in the POA Theater of War under Adm. Nimitz' command, and it would end in the SWPA Theater of War, under Gen. MacArthur's command.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE. The strategic objective of the Solomons Campaign was the seizure of the New Britain - New Ireland area, (i.e. Rabaul).

OPERATIONAL PLANNING. Adm. King's warning order on 25 June came as no surprise to Adm. Nimitz. To bolster the forces assigned to the SPA, Adm. Nimitz possessed the foresight to initiate inter-theater and intra-theater mobilization and deployment of forces. On 26 June, shortly after his arrival in Wellington, New Zealand, Adm. Nimitz directed Maj. Gen. Vandergrift to prepare his 1st Marine Division for the invasion. Adm. Nimitz also requested permission from the JCS for the apportionment of additional joint forces and assets to support the invasion. Specifically naval forces (surface ships and submarines), from the SWPA to the SPA, and SWPA air forces (land-based aircraft) to support the invasion from bases in the SWPA. Adm. Nimitz also requested CPA air forces (land-based aircraft), to re-deploy from Hawaii to New Caledonia and the Fijis.<sup>3</sup>

On 19 June, Vice Adm. Ghoraley assumed command as CINCSPA and immediately began working on plans for Phase One of the Solomon Islands campaign. Planning tasks were done 'ad hoc' and many intelligence assumptions and logistical shortcuts were also made due to the time constraint placed upon them. "From an intelligence point of view, the Guadalcanal-Tulagi landings can hardly be described as more than a stab in the dark."<sup>4</sup> Detailed information such as aerial photographs, charts and hydrographic information, and

climatology were non-existent, or inaccurate. Shortages in the availability of long-range reconnaissance aircraft restricted the amount of operational intelligence that could be gathered. The 'Essential Elements of Information' listed in Op-Plan 1-42 reflected the uncertainty of the planners:<sup>5</sup>

- a. Will Orange defend?
- b. Will Orange be reinforced?
- c. Will Orange launch an offensive prior to D-Day in this area?
- d. After our seizure of objective, will Orange attempt to recapture?
- e. Are there any terrain features not shown on existing charts which will affect our mission?

Confronted with time constraints, logistical problems, and shortages of operational intelligence, the operational planners renamed Operation WATCHTOWER - 'Operation SHOESTRING'. Maj. Gen. Vandergrift's 1st Marine Division was at the tactical end of this operational shoestring. Elements of his Division were scattered throughout the theater and the second echelon of his Division, en-route from the United States, had not yet arrived. Tremendous logistical problems faced them, and torrential rains hampered their efforts to off-load, then combat load the transports that would be utilized in the amphibious assault. Maj. Gen. Vandergrift appealed to Vice Adm. Gormley that he could not be ready for the proposed D-Day and requested a delay. On 17 July, Vice Adm. Gormley relayed this request up the chain of command. Adm. King ultimately approved a six day delay, but admonished that D-Day had to be 7 August. His reasons were well founded. Intelligence reports and reconnaissance flights reported that the airfield on Guadalcanal was nearly completed. To invade in the face of land-based air would be far too

dangerous.<sup>6</sup>

The JCS had made a calculated rational decision in authorizing WATCHTOWER. The risks created by the immediate commencement of the operation were worth the strategic advantage to be gained. "Equally clear was the fact that the Joint Chiefs realized that invading Guadalcanal and Tulagi, before sufficient forces could be mustered for the advance against Rabaul, would be an operation in which the margin for error would be perilously small."<sup>7</sup>

OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVE. On 16 July, Vice Adm. Gormley, COMSOPAC, issued Operation Plan 1-42 which defined the operational objective of Operation WATCHTOWER: seize and occupy the Tulagi-Guadalcanal area. The intermediate tactical objectives of Operation WATCHTOWER were to: capture and occupy Tulagi and adjacent positions, capture and occupy adjoining portion of Guadalcanal suitable for the construction of landing fields, initiate construction of landing fields without delay, and defend seized areas until relieved by forces to be designated later.<sup>8</sup>

FINAL PLANS AND PREPARATIONS. By mid-July, deployment of forces and assets for the operation were underway. The aircraft carrier Yasp set sail from San Diego accompanied by transports carrying the 2nd Marines on 1 July. The carriers Saratoga (with Vice Adm. Fletcher in command) and Enterprise set sail from Pearl Harbor on 7 July. Warships from the SWPA departed Brisbane, Australia on 14 July. On 22 July, two ships carrying the Marine 3rd Defense Battalion left Pearl Harbor late and did not join the Expeditionary Force until 3 August. On 26 July, Vice Adm. Gormley rendezvoused

his maritime invasion forces at a position southeast of Fiji for a rehearsal and final planning conference for his tactical commanders. This would be the first opportunity for most of them to meet face-to-face. However, of significance, Vice Adm. Gormaley did not attend the conference.<sup>9</sup>

Many final details were ironed out, but the meeting also highlighted several alarming operational problems. The most serious problem was Vice Adm. Fletcher's plan to retire his Air Support Force on D-Day plus two as his priorities lay in protecting his carriers. The consequence of Vice Adm. Fletcher's plan was that transport and supply ships would be left without air and surface protection during their final unloading stages. Rear Adm. Turner and Maj. Gen. Vandergrift had planned for the off load evolution to take 3-5 days. Their transport ships would be forced to either stay in the area unprotected or leave with Vice Adm. Fletcher. A heated debate resulted amongst Turner, Vandergrift and Fletcher. The conference ended with Vice Adm. Fletcher's plans to retire unchanged.

Vice Adm. Gormaley was later advised of Vice Adm. Fletcher's plan. Vice Adm. Gormaley had planned however, to provide air support to the Marines by flying in naval aircraft from the carriers to Guadalcanal, if the airfield was suitable. They, in turn would be relieved by aircraft from Rear Adm. McCain's TF 63 - land-based in Espirito Santo and Efate. Two fatal flaws existed in Vice Adm. Gormaley's plan: the airfield on Guadalcanal was not operational and the land-based aircraft could not fly the distances from their bases to Guadalcanal due a lack of external fuel tank supplies.<sup>10</sup> The 'shoestring' stretched tighter.

Two rehearsals were conducted from 28 - 31 July. Critical training was conducted in debarkation and timing of landing forces, as well as air and naval gunfire support procedures. However, coral reefs and OPSEC requirements (maintain radio silence) hampered the invasion forces' training. Maj. Gen. Vandergrift later wrote, "the advantages gained from the Koro rehearsal were 'dubious' when compared with the loss of 'priceless time'."11

ENEMY CRITICAL FACTORS. The Solomons Campaign plan accurately identified and specifically focused on the enemy's center of gravity (COG) - Rabaul - Japan's greatest strength in the SWPA. It represented the concentration of Japan's strength most vital to them in the accomplishment of their strategic aim - isolation of Australia.<sup>12</sup> The Solomons Campaign plan recognized that the Japanese COG was not vulnerable to direct attack. The three phased, sequential Solomons Campaign plan was an 'indirect' approach to attack and destroy the Japanese COG. It was to be achieved by conducting naval operations that focused on deliberately selected points of enemy vulnerability and attacked the decisive points of Tulagi and Guadalcanal. Although the Solomons Campaign plan focused on the sequence of actions necessary to expose, attack and destroy the Japanese COG, WATCHTOWER's operational plan did not provide for adequate protection of the Expeditionary Force's COG once established ashore - the Marines on Guadalcanal.

DIRECTION/AXIS. The operational design of the Solomons Campaign established the campaign's strategic direction as a Northwest thrust through the Solomons Island chain to New Britain. As Adm. King had stated, "Drive Northwestward from New Hebrides".<sup>13</sup> This axis

synchronized the phases of the campaign.

OPERATIONAL SCHEME. Op. Plan 1-42 presented an overview of how U.S. forces and assets were to be employed to seize and occupy the Tulagi-Guadalcanal area. It was creatively simple and incorporated limited deception. Amphibious in nature, it planned for mobility and speed of execution. The following are essential elements of the operational scheme:

Method of Defeating the Opponent. The Solomons Campaign plan involved an 'indirect' approach at attacking Japan's strategic COG by systematically destroying his basing areas, seizing decisive points, and ultimately confronting the Japanese with piecemeal defeat. The operational scheme of Operation WATCHTOWER involved a 'direct' approach at attacking the Japan's operational COG by direct application of U.S. forces against Japanese basing - Tulagi and Guadalcanal.

Application of Forces and Assets. The planning evolution of Operation WATCHTOWER was certainly an iterative process. Encumbered by the Allied Grand Strategy, Admirals King, Nimitz and Ghormley struggled to locate, request, approve, mobilize and deploy adequate forces and assets to begin the operation. The task before them was monumental: prepare for the largest amphibious operation that U.S. forces had ever been involved in. Forces and assets for the early stages of the operation included three aircraft carriers with accompanying cruisers and destroyers, 1st Marine Division forces and associated transport and supply assets, naval and marine carrier

based aircraft, and land-based aircraft from bases in the SPA. Land-based aircraft, surface ships and submarines would be apportioned from the SWPA.<sup>14</sup> The plans also called for Army ground forces from the SPA to garrison Tulagi and Guadalcanal, following the 1st Marine Division's occupation of these areas. The few Army forces available in the SPA, however, had been utilized to garrison the Fiji Islands, New Caledonia and Samoa.

Sector of Main Effort. The sector of main effort for Operation WATCHTOWER was the southeast end of the Solomon Islands chain contained in the SPA. The major part of U.S. air and naval forces and assets were employed to attain the primary objective in this sector. The Solomon Sea - New Guinea area in the SWPA was the secondary sector of effort. Due to movement of forces from the SWPA to the SPA, the SWPA lacked operational depth and was assigned limited objectives for Operation WATCHTOWER.

Operational Maneuver. Operation WATCHTOWER's operational maneuver was designed to create a decisive impact against Japanese vulnerabilities at Guadalcanal and Tulagi by concentrating simultaneous force and capitalizing on the amphibious mobility of the Amphibious Force. It planned for maneuvering the Amphibious Force (from its rendezvous point north of its base of operation) west to a point 400 nmi south of Guadalcanal Island. Here, the forces would maneuver north to a position due west of the north-west coast of Guadalcanal, and then split into two groups for the amphibious assaults on Tulagi and Guadalcanal. Aided by the cover of night in its final stages, the maneuver's intent was to secure an operational advantage of position and surprise for the assault.

Operational Fires. Operational fires planned for Operation WATCHTOWER were carrier and land-based aircraft which were integrated with the Amphibious Force's operational maneuver. These operational fires were intended to facilitate the operational maneuver, disrupt the maneuver of the Japanese if they counter-attacked, and destroy Japanese positions and facilities in the sector of main effort prior to the amphibious landings.

The separate elements of U.S. submarines planned to reach deep into the theater at choke points in the northern Solomons, could also be considered as operational fires. The intent of these submarine forces were to disrupt the maneuver of Japanese warships based at Rabaul.

Operational Protection. Carrier-based aircraft were planned to provide protection to the Expeditionary Force's COG - the aircraft carriers - during the maneuver. Forces planned to provide air and surface protection to the Amphibious Force (TF 62) during the maneuver were the Air Support Force (TG 61.1), the Escort Task Group (TG 62.2) and the Minesweeper Group (TG 62.5) consisting of three aircraft carriers, one battleship and numerous cruisers, destroyers and minesweeps. Land-based aircraft from Task Force 63 were also tasked to provide operational protection by covering the approach to, and the operations within, the Tulagi-Guadalcanal area by search and to render aircraft support on call ... to destroy important enemy forces at any opportunity.<sup>15</sup>

Operational Deception. The operational deception plan was limited in scope - no intentional feints were incorporated in the Op-Plan. OPSEC was effectively utilized to the maximum extent

possible during the preparation phase. The success of the operation hinged on tight security to prevent Japanese discovery of the operational scheme. Discovery would have allowed the Japanese to attack and disrupt the Expeditionary Force with enemy operational fires, before it achieved a positional advantage to conduct the assault. Security measures were so tight that the majority of Allied forces were uninformed of the operation until the last moment. The plan was "tightly held in the staff. It wasn't even discussed outside."<sup>16</sup> Sailors, marines and dock workers were deceived to believe that their hurried preparations were for a training exercise. Press reports and servicemen's letters home were strictly censored.

Culminating Points. In spite of insufficient operational intelligence available during the preparations for Operation WATCHTOWER, U.S. operational planners were able to accurately estimate the Japanese defense strength and correctly calculate the culminating point for the assault. They assembled an Expeditionary Force attack strength which greatly exceeded that of the Japanese defenders for the amphibious landings. The uncertainty of this calculation was how much attack strength the Japanese would respond with, once Guadalcanal and Tulagi were seized.

Phasing. The initial phase of the Solomons Campaign plan was the operation code-named Operation PESTILENCE. Its operational design provided for three sequential phases. Each phase was a distinct episode that laid the groundwork for commencement of the subsequent phase.

Phase I: Code-named Operation DOVETAIL, was a rehearsal of the Tulagi-Guadalcanal attack, conducted in the Fiji Area. Phase II: Code-named Operation WATCHTOWER, was the seizure and occupation of the Tulagi-Guadalcanal Area. Phase III: Code-named Operation HUDDLE, was the seizure of Ndeni in the Santa Cruz Islands.<sup>17</sup>

Operational Pause. The operational design of Operation PESTILENCE planned for an operational pause to occur following the seizure and occupation of Guadalcanal and Tulagi. Its intent was to reinforce and resupply occupation forces.

Sequencing. Sequencing of the phases/operations of the Solomons Campaign was planned to allow inferior elements of U.S. Naval forces in the SWPA and SPA to engage the stronger Japanese opponent and strike a decisive blow by concentrating superior combat power in time and space.<sup>18</sup> Operation PESTILENCE's Op-Plan defined the sequencing of required operations, yet it inadequately addressed and planned for the application of available forces and assets to achieve the desired military conditions necessary for the defense of Guadalcanal and Tulagi. It specifically stated, "Occupation forces will be utilized, under orders to be issued later, to garrison the Tulagi-Guadalcanal area, freeing the amphibious forces for further offensive action."<sup>19</sup> "Although on 14 July, Adm. Gormley had directed the 7th Marines in Samoa to be ready to embark on four days notice with ninety days' supply and ten units of fire, no Army units for reinforcing or relieving the division were alerted."<sup>20</sup>

Synchronization. Op-Plan 1-42 provided the general concept of operations for the invasion. Adm. Turner's follow on TF 62 Op-Plan

A3-42, provided detailed operational and tactical plans for the synchronization of joint sea, land and air elements, operational fires, and operational protection to apply overwhelming force against the Japanese occupation forces. These plans included elements of fire support, minesweeping, screening, and air support.

Operational Reserve. The operational commanders recognized serious limitations of operational reserves in the early planning stages. In April, Adm. King had sent the following message to Vice Adm. Ghormley:

"You have been selected to command the South Pacific Force and South Pacific Area. You will have a large area under your command and a most difficult task. I do not have the tools to give you to carry out that task as it should be. ... In time, possibly this fall, we hope to start an offensive from the South Pacific."21

During subsequent planning, Adms. King and Nimitz assessed the reserves needed for carrying out the operation and the generation of replacements and reserves for subsequent operations. Due to the strategic importance of the Guadalcanal-Tulagi area and the ongoing efforts of the Japanese to construct an airfield on Guadalcanal, their decision to immediately initiate offensive operations reflected that they accepted the risks that limited operational reserves would create.

OPERATIONAL SUSTAINMENT. Planners of the Solomons Campaign realized that offensive operations would be limited in design and execution to a greater extent by the support structure and resources available in the POA and SWPA theaters of war, than by purely operational requirements. During the early months of the planning evolution, "there were then available so few warships, transports,

and cargo ships, so few trained troops, so few weapons and supplies, that any offensive in the Pacific, for which the United States would have to provide most of the forces, would necessarily be limited in scale."<sup>22</sup> One could question whether or not the CINCs had reasonable confidence that the support structure of the immature SPA could sustain combat forces until major operational objectives could be attained. Aware of significant shortcomings in operational sustainment, the operational commanders were unable to correct them prior to commencement of the invasion. Inadequate sustainment provisions for the 1st Marines was the most critical operational flaw.<sup>23</sup> "It is significant to note that whereas plans for the landing operations proper were detailed and comprehensive, there was no reference to systematic re-supply of the 1st Marine Division which carried sufficient supplies for sixty days."<sup>24</sup>

In retrospect, due to an inadequate number of transports supporting their operational transportation system and the need to protect those positions already established in the SPA, operational commanders were unable to effectively free up or move Army garrison troops to reinforce or relieve the Marines.

## CHAPTER V

### EXECUTION PHASE

SUMMARY OF EVENTS. Espirito-Santo became operational on 31 July and Tulagi and Japanese installations on Guadalcanal were bombed heavily for several days prior to D-Day. On 5 August, "the force proceeded North through bad weather which hindered air operations. The weather cleared during the night of August 6 to permit fixing the position of Task Force 62 and permitting it to pass between Guadalcanal and Russell Islands. Complete radio silence was preserved, there were no enemy contacts enroute. Task Forces' approach was a complete surprise to the enemy."<sup>1</sup>

On the morning of 7 August, Task Force 62 attacked the islands of Tulagi, Gavutu, Tanambogo, and Guadalcanal. The landing on Guadalcanal met minimal resistance. Japanese troops entrenched on Tulagi, Gavutu and Tanambogo offered greater resistance, which required a few days to defeat and produced a greater number of casualties than on Guadalcanal. Marine operational reserves being held for Phase III of Operation PESTILENCE were called in to reinforce the Gavutu and Tanambogo invasion forces.

Logistics problems hampered the landing evolution. Heavy equipment and supplies bogged down and piled up on Guadalcanal. Trucks able to haul this equipment had been left in Noumea because of the limited transports available. Additionally, few Marines were allocated to work in shore parties to off-load supplies due to the minimum number of Marines that existed to begin with. This problem is one of many that illustrate how shortcuts at the operational level during the planning phase, seriously effected the execution of

the operation at the tactical level.

The Japanese immediately began their preparations for a counter-attack and sortied land-based aircraft south from Rabaul to interdict any U.S. forces discovered. 'Coastwatcher' tactical intelligence units sighted and reported the incoming Japanese raid. The unloading evolution was halted and carrier-based aircraft met and defeated the Japanese air attack.

It was here, that Operation WATCHTOWER took a turn for the worse. On the night of 9 August, Japanese naval warships arrived in the area undetected and engaged the Expeditionary Force's escorts. The Battle of Savo Island ensued. Adm. Fletcher decided to retire that night. The next morning, Rear Adm. Turner having lost four cruisers in the Battle of Savo Island and left unprotected by Fletcher's departure, was forced to depart the area with many transports still not fully unloaded. The Japanese gained the initiative and control of the sea area north of Guadalcanal. The Marines on Guadalcanal had received approximately half of their intended sixty day ration. "The shoestring of this first Allied offensive seemed to be pulling apart. This was the first of the operation's many dark hours."<sup>2</sup> From that moment until the end of the six month series of battles and engagements that ensued, Operation WATCHTOWER became a contest of operational protection and operational sustainment.

The Japanese continued their counter-offensive by conducting repeated day attacks with Rabaul land-based aircraft and night 'hit and run' attacks with the 'Tokyo Express' naval forces. They attempted to regain control of Guadalcanal by landing only 2,000 troops. As the Japanese filtered ashore and positioned for their offensive, 'Operation KA', Marines dug in and prepared defenses of

Henderson Field on Guadalcanal. Marine land-based aircraft finally arrived on 20 August. The first Japanese land attack was also foiled on this day. As August dragged on, U.S. resupplies came by any means available. By mid-August, Adm. King was competing with the North African Campaign and the BOLERO build-up for operational forces and assets. On 24 August, the Battle of the Eastern Solomons began. Fletcher's carrier-based aircraft returned and synchronized with Army and Marine land-based aircraft to check the Japanese attempt to recapture Guadalcanal.

The Japanese commenced 'Operation RAT' on 27 August, in a new attempt to reinforce Guadalcanal. Japanese efforts centered around stealthy destroyer night landings to regenerate their combat power on Guadalcanal. On 30 August, new aircraft arrived on Guadalcanal, but Henderson Field still lacked long-range land-based bombers. On 31 August, Saratoga was torpedoed and put out of action.

On 1 September, the first Naval Construction Battalion arrived at Guadalcanal and shortly thereafter the South Pacific Combat Air Transportation Command began to resupply the island. On 10 Sept., Adm. Nimitz "ordered all carrier aircraft 'that could be spared' to be flown to Guadalcanal, thus contradicting the navy's doctrine that carrier aircraft should fly from carriers."<sup>3</sup> On 12 September, the Marines on Guadalcanal turned back a Japanese land attack in the Battle of Bloody Ridge. The reinforcement contest continued. On 14 September, the Seventh Marines sailed from Espirito Santo protected by the carriers Hornet and Wasp. The Wasp was sunk by Japanese submarines and the Japanese began the first of many battleship bombardments on Henderson Field. "The loss of Wasp was to deepen Adm. Ernest King's conviction that the desperate situation at Guadalcanal could not be retrieved without more airplanes for

Henderson Field."<sup>4</sup> Gen. Arnold diverted fifteen land-based aircraft originally allocated for the North African invasion to Guadalcanal. On 18 Sept., 4000 troops of the 7th Marine regiment reinforcements arrived at Guadalcanal bringing U.S. troop strength to 19,000. On 23 September, Marines on Guadalcanal attempted to regain the tactical initiative and were defeated at Matanikau.

The Japanese "began October determined to wipe out American fighter strength. ... Alone in August, at bay in September the U.S. had fought the enemy off; but now the month of crisis was at hand."<sup>5</sup> On 8 Oct., Vice Adm. Ghoraley, postponed Phase III of Operation PESTILENCE. On the night of 11 Oct., in a U.S. effort to crush the Tokyo Express, the Battle of Cape Esperance began. The resultant U.S. victory temporarily neutralized Japanese control of the sea areas north of Guadalcanal. On 13 Oct., the first regiment of Army reinforcement forces arrived at Guadalcanal. The same day the Japanese began their third attempt to re-take the island with heavy shelling and damage resulting at Henderson Field. On 15 Oct., Adm. Nimitz wrote to Adm. King, "It now appears that we are unable to control the sea in the Guadalcanal area. ... Thus our supply of the positions will only be done at great expense to us. The situation is not hopeless, but it is certainly critical."<sup>6</sup> Desiring more aggressiveness from his SPA CINC, Adm. Nimitz relieved Vice Adm. Ghoraley of command and replaced him with Vice Adm. 'Bull' Halsey on 19 Oct. Halsey immediately took the offensive. On 26 Oct., Halsey engaged his carriers in the Battle of Santa Cruz Islands and despite losing tactically, Halsey's forces checked the Japanese efforts to retake the island. "After Santa Cruz, Japan's carrier based aircraft would no longer be a factor at Guadalcanal."<sup>7</sup>

November marked the beginning of the end for the Japanese. As

the North African invasion began. Halsey cancelled Phase III of Operation PESTILENCE, and diverted its assets to Guadalcanal. The original Marine forces that had invaded the island in August were still fighting for survival and replacement. By mid-November Japanese forces on Guadalcanal outnumbered U.S. forces 30,000 to 23,000. Realizing the desperate situation Halsey began immediate reinforcement. The Battle of Guadalcanal resulted from 12 - 15 November, and despite heavy losses, repulsed the Japanese efforts to reinforce the island.

In December, the Japanese immediately began preparations for their fifth attempt to retake the island. Reinforced air forces from Henderson Field, torpedo boats and submarines repeatedly interdicted Japanese destroyers and troop barges attempting to reinforce Guadalcanal. Desperate, the Japanese began floating supplies ashore in drums at the end of December. On 31 December, the Japanese conceded defeat on Guadalcanal and began plans to evacuate.

January and February 1943, brought the end for the Japanese on Guadalcanal. U.S. aircraft, submarines and torpedo boats continued to interdict and frustrate the Japanese efforts to remove their 11,000 troops from Guadalcanal. On 9 February 1943, the evacuation was complete and the six month Japanese counter-offensive was over.

OPERATIONAL ANALYSIS. The following are principle elements of the operation's execution worthy of discussion:

Operational Sustainment. Operation WATCHTOWER was in a nutshell a series of air, land and sea battles that inflicted damage or

attrition to the vulnerable operational sustainment systems of both sides. Operational sustainment was the predominant factor that shaped the series of events and influenced the ultimate outcome of the Operation.

Initiating offensive operations in the Solomons was a correct strategic decision in respect to both the time and space domain. With respect to operational 'means' to accomplish the strategic 'ends' however, the question remained, could the U.S. generate sufficient resources to sustain this shift? U.S. strategic and operational leaders gambled that they could sustain U.S. forward deployed fleet units and major tactical units in the 'fog of war'. The synergistic effect of exterior lines of operation, exposed lines of communication, secondary theater of war sustainment priorities, and limited assets for operational transportation combined to seriously impact the movement of material and supply through the SPA theater of operations to the tactical units on Guadalcanal and Tulagi.<sup>8</sup>

Application of Forces and Assets. Unavailability of Army reserve forces had a dramatic impact on the operational sustainment of the 1st Marine Division as Operation WATCHTOWER dragged out. More importantly, the apportionment of forces to Europe and the Pacific stretched resources so thin that no significant forces were available to be withheld for reserves during subsequent phases of the Solomons Campaign. The campaign's success became totally constrained by the limited operational forces available for the allocation and apportionment to Operation WATCHTOWER.

Operational Maneuver. Aided by the cover of weather, the maneuver secured an operational advantage of position and surprise to conduct the assault. These advantages permitted the Expeditionary Force to concentrate its force and apply it in a decisive manner. The disruptive effects of this maneuver on the Japanese were temporary. The operational maneuver had not included adequate provisions of operational counter mobility. The Air Support Force and Fire Support Groups were able to provide adequate air and surface cover against the Japanese counter-offensive but departure of Fletcher's Air Support Force, stripped the Expeditionary Force of its ability to attack the movement of enemy operational-size forces.

Additionally, the Expeditionary Force lacked favorable lines of operations. Exterior lines of operations hampered the operational commanders' efforts to protect U.S. lines of communications, resupply their forces, interdict the movement of Japanese forces, and maintain operational tempo.<sup>9</sup>

Operational Fires. Operational fires were initially utilized to prepare the amphibious landing areas as land-based aircraft attacked and destroyed several Japanese positions and facilities on Tulagi and Guadalcanal. However, these land-based aircraft lacked the range and lethality to effectively reach into the depths of the theater. Although MacArthur's land-based aircraft conducted attacks on Rabaul, they were unable to destroy or substantially degrade the Japanese naval and air basing systems located there. Carrier-based aircraft and submarines (utilized primarily in the operational protection role) also served as operational fires sporadically and for the most part ineffectively throughout the operation.

At no time were U.S. operational fires able to isolate the maritime area of operations. They were unable to effectively interdict Japanese forces and their logistical sustainment, until the airfield at Guadalcanal became operational and sufficient land-based aircraft arrived. The inability of these operational fires to effectively disrupt the enemy's defenses in theater led to a long drawn out operation that could not accelerate the culminating point of the Japanese counter-offensive.<sup>10</sup>

Operational Protection. The planned forces for operational protection provided adequate defense to the Expeditionary Force during their operational maneuver. The Air Support Force and the Escort Task Group provided protection from Japanese operational fires and naval attacks. Vice Adm. Fletcher's departure on D-Day plus two left the marines alone and undefended. Throughout the campaign, operational protection assets were utilized to defend carrier forces and transports, with mixed results. The U.S. lost 24 warships totalling 126,240 tons.

Operational Deception. Although limited operational deception was employed, OPSEC successfully concealed friendly actions and intentions until it was too late for the Japanese to effectively react to the operational maneuver.

Culminating Points. The success of Operation WATCHTOWER balanced on which side could reinforce more rapidly. Both sides perilously approached their culmination points during the exchange of land battles and naval engagements that ensued. The U.S. was barely able to muster sustaining resources which almost forced Operation

WATCHTOWER to culminate before victory could be achieved.

In the end, unable to reach a point where their attack strength exceeded that of the defenders, Japan's continued offensive actions overextended their counter-attack capabilities and they were defeated. This culmination allowed the U.S. to re-transition to offensive operations and commence Phase II of the Solomons Campaign.

Phasing. Phases I and II of Operation PESTILENCE were planned with some degree of certainty. However, many battles and engagements took place during Phase II that the U.S. did not anticipate. Adm. Nimitz and Vice Adm. Gormley were unable to provide timely supporting forces and reinforcements that allowed for a combination of actions to most effectively and quickly achieve the operational aims. The U.S. was only able to accomplish Phase I and II of Operation PESTILENCE and Phase III - the seizure of Ndeni in the Santa Cruz Islands - was cancelled.

Operational Pause. During the operational pause following the seizure and occupation of Guadalcanal and Tulagi, the initiative was ceded to the Japanese as the occupation forces transitioned to the defense. Each side was forced to assess the enemy's situation in terms of relative combat power. Erroneous assessments of relative combat power by the Japanese led to a poorly coordinated piecemeal counter-offensive and they were unable to maintain a controlled relationship to their culminating point. Barely able to provide adequate supplies and forces to check the Japanese counter-offensive, Adm. Nimitz and Vice Adm. Gormley also struggled to maintain a favorable relationship to the U.S. culminating point.<sup>11</sup>

Sequencing. Adm. Nimitz and Vice Adm. Gormley were unable to adhere to their previously planned sequencing scheme due to limited forces available to oppose the Japanese counter-offensive. Attempts to organize and allocate forces and assets fell short of operational requirements and impacted the effectiveness of tactical level forces. Able to win decisively in defensive engagements against Japanese attacks, Maj. Gen. Vandergrift's forces were unable to strike a decisive blow against the Japanese when they attempted offensive tactical actions.

Synchronization. Synchronization of joint sea, land and air elements, operational fires, and operational protection allowed the U.S. to apply overwhelming force against the meager Japanese forces on Tulagi and Guadalcanal during the amphibious invasion.

Following these initial tactical successes, 'clarity of intent' became a problem in achieving successful synchronization of tactical elements. Although Fletcher had stated that he would retire his carriers on D-Day plus two, the amphibious and landing force tactical commanders believed he would change his intentions and remain on station if needed. His departure permitted the Japanese to initiate their counter-offensive, and seize the initiative from the U.S. Unable to apply overwhelming force, U.S. operational and tactical commanders struggled to initiate offensive actions in order to wrest the initiative back.<sup>12</sup> Synchronization of operational reserves, operational protection, logistical sustainment and operational fires were hampered by limited resources available. Synchronization of land, sea and air elements could not be conducted in a complementary and reinforcing fashion in regards to the 'time'

dimension. The operational commanders threw everything they had, whenever it became available, at the Japanese just to survive. The battle for control of Guadalcanal became a contest of attrition - to force the enemy to reach his culminating point first.

Operational Reserve. The operational reserve for Operation WATCHTOWER was not of sufficient size and flexibility to affect decisive outcome in the theater of operation. Limited operational reserves effected the operational commanders' ability to influence the operation beyond the initial clash of forces. The U.S. did not possess an adequate operational reserve of aircraft carriers. The three aircraft carriers available were the only carrier assets remaining and were considered too precious to sacrifice. These carriers were damaged, sunk or forced to retire in numerous naval engagements throughout the operation. Operational reserves of Army land forces and land-based aircraft were also limited due to the apportionment of them to the war on the European continent.<sup>13</sup>

Despite creating conditions of 'economy of force' in other Pacific operational theaters, the operational commanders were unable to withhold major combat forces and assets in anticipation of delivering a decisive blow. Without adequate operational reserves they struggled to regain the initiative, inflict high attrition rates, counter unexpected developments, and reinforce friendly forces. As a result, the operational commanders were unable to accomplish their operational goals in a timely manner.

## CHAPTER VI

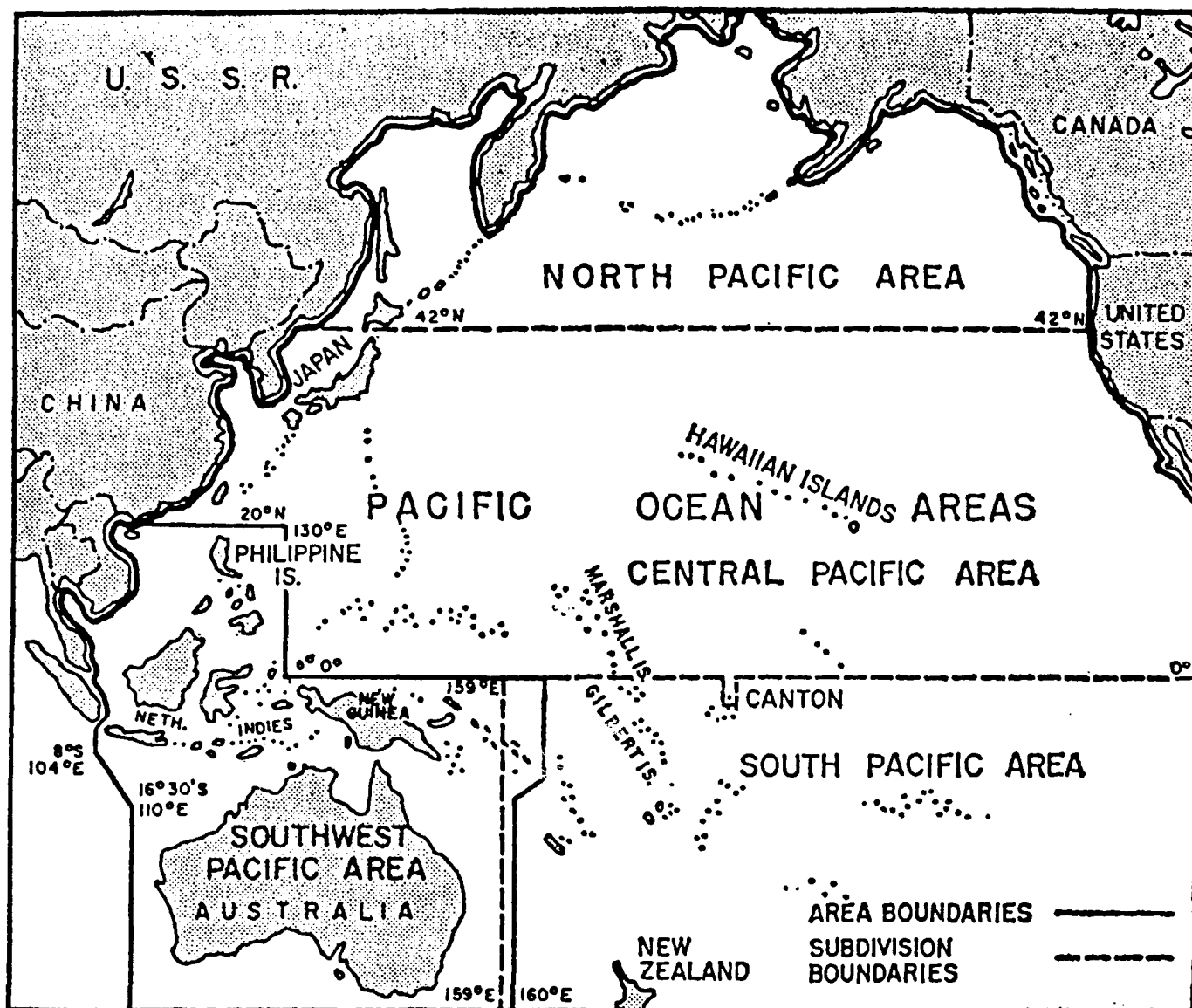
### OPERATIONAL LESSONS LEARNED

- 'Ad Hoc' operational planning and preparations produce shortcuts and assumptions that seriously effect the execution of the operation at the tactical level and hinder timely attainment of tactical and operational objectives.
- The operational commander should always be present for final planning conferences of major operations. His presence is necessary to resolve differences in planning amongst his subordinate operational and tactical commanders and to provide final guidance on operational priorities.
- Unity of command, unity of effort and effective cooperation are essential to the success of any operation exposed to the 'fog of war'. Every operational/tactical commander must fully understand the operational intent of his superior.
- Commencing offensive operations before sufficient forces and assets can be attained, creates an operation dependent on high risk and a small margin of error. Insufficient size and flexibility of operational reserves negatively impact the operational commanders' ability to influence the operation beyond the initial clash of forces.
- Operational plans that adequately plan for the application of available forces and assets yet fail to make provisions for their sustainment and relief, will perilously approach their culmination point or fail during the exchange of unexpected battles and engagements.

- Operational deception coordinated with operational maneuver is essential to achieving surprise.
- To seize the initiative, one must possess adequate provisions for operational maneuver and operational protection.
- To retain the initiative, one must possess adequate provisions for operational protection and operational sustainment. Without adequate provisions of operational countermobility, the disruptive effects of an operational maneuver are temporary at best.
- Well planned operational plans to destroy the enemy's center-of-gravity are ineffectual if one cannot protect his own center-of-gravity.
- Inadequate operational reserves create tremendous vulnerabilities and severely restrict operational flexibility.
- Lack of adequate operational protection during an operational pause can cede the initiative to the enemy.
- Inadequate provisions of operational protection and operational sustainment negatively impact the operational commander's ability to provide timely supporting forces and reinforcements that allow for a combination of actions to most effectively and quickly achieve operational aims.
- Operational fires that lack the lethality and range to reach into the depths of the theater cannot substantially degrade the enemy's basing systems or isolate the maritime area of operations.
- Aggressive operational leadership is essential to the success of offensive operations aimed at taking the initiative from the enemy.
- In an immature theater with exterior lines of operations, operational sustainment is paramount to the successful achievement of operational objectives. Without adequate sustainment means, execution of the operation becomes a gamble that friendly forces can

be sustained in the 'fog of war'. During the exchange of unexpected battles and engagements, operational sustainment directly contributes to the position one attains with respect to his culmination point.

- Exterior lines of operation hamper efforts to protect lines of communications, resupply forces, interdict the movement of enemy forces, and maintain operational tempo.
- Clarity of operational intent is essential to achieve successful synchronization of operational and tactical elements.
- Limited availability of operational resources seriously impacts the synchronization of operational reserves, operational protection, logistical sustainment and operational fires. Elements of combat power cannot be synchronized in a complementary and reinforcing fashion in regards to the 'time' (availability) dimension.
- Distant locations of operational command headquarters slow down communications and severely limit the operational commander's ability to control and provide support to his operational and tactical commanders.
- An operational plan that does not successfully achieve all of its operational objectives in execution can still contribute to the successful achievement of the campaign's strategic objective.



# PACIFIC THEATERS

FIGURE 1



# COMMAND ORGANIZATION

## LEVEL

NATIONAL  
STRATEGIC

JCS

THEATER  
STRATEGIC

GEN. D. MACARTHUR  
CINCSWPA

ADM. C. W. NIMITZ  
CINCPOA

OPERATIONAL

VADM R. L. GHORMLEY  
COMSOPAC

TF 61  
EXPEDITIONARY FORCE  
VADM F. J. FLETCHER

TF 63  
LAND BASED AIR SOPAC FORCE  
RADM J. S. MCCAIN

OPERATIONAL  
TACTICAL

TF 62  
SOPAC AMPHIBIOUS FORCE  
RADM R. K. TURNER

TACTICAL

TG 61.1  
AIR SUPPORT FORCE  
FLEET ADM L. NOYES

TG 62.1  
CONVOY  
CAPT L. F. REIFSNIDER

TG 62.8  
LANDING FORCES  
MGEN A. A. VANDERGRIFT

TG 62.2  
ESCORT  
RADM V. A. CRUTCHLEY, RN

TG 62.5  
MINE SWEEPER GROUP  
CDR W.H. HART, JR.

FIGURE 3

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